

SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH QUALIFYING GRANT PROGRAM (SBMHQGP) GOAL WRITING GUIDANCE

Purpose

This document is meant to provide local education agencies (LEAs) with guidance when creating their goals for the SBMHQGP. It includes sample goals for each category; this list is not exhaustive. Goals should be carefully chosen based on existing school data and identified areas of improvement and must be approved by your LEA governing board as per [Utah Code Section 53F-2-415\(3\)\(a\)](#).

Pre-work

Reviewing [Utah's School Behavioral Health Toolkit](#) and its data-driven approach is recommended, as this document may assist in pinpointing areas for improvement. Areas for improvement should be based on student outcome and derived from various data points, including trends, patterns, low points and challenges. The identified challenges must be addressable with grant resources, which are directly tied to the salaries, benefits and contracted services of qualifying personnel. Qualifying personnel have different scopes of practice, which should be taken into consideration when aligning data, goals and services that will impact the SBMHQGP goals. Ensure that the qualifying personnel that have been hired or contracted can support the identified areas for improvement.

To integrate the behavioral health toolkit into your goal writing, keep the following in mind.

- **Toolkit framework:** Utilize the five-stage framework of the toolkit, which is constituted of assessment of system needs, building capacity, planning, implementation and evaluation.
- **Guiding principles:** Incorporate the guiding principles of the toolkit which are culture, data, collaboration and sustainability.
- **Assessment of system needs:** Identify local behavioral health needs based on data by examining current practices and gaps.

- **Building capacity:** Create local resources and build readiness to address behavioral health needs.
- **Planning:** Select appropriate programs and strategies for your community.
- **Implementation:** Deliver evidence-based programs and practices.
- **Interagency goal setting:** Set goals with various stakeholders. Define terms together, use feedback, establish accountability, hold regular meetings, create short and long-term goals and identify roles and responsibilities.

***Note:** all goals must be approved by the LEA's governing board.

Goals

LEAs must include at least two goals in their plan. LEAs may also choose to include a third goal in their application; this is not required. The goal categories are chosen by the LEA. Goals must be tied to student outcome data that relates to student engagement, school culture, student safety and/or academic achievement.

LEAs must detail services that will directly impact their goal(s) and are provided by their qualifying personnel in their application. The entire target population of said goal(s) should be serviced by the LEA's qualifying personnel, regardless of whether the personnel are directly hired or contracted.

For example, if a goal targets all students in grades eight through ten, then the qualifying personnel must provide services to all students in those grades. Alternatively, goal specification could focus on a particular group within the LEA's elementary schools, such as elementary students who receive a high number of office referrals. This would indicate that the LEA's qualifying mental health professional will serve a specific sector of the school population.

Setting S.M.A.R.T. Goals

When developing SBMHQGP mental health goals, it is crucial to ensure they are well-defined and measurable. Using the S.M.A.R.T. framework can help achieve this.

SMART stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

The following section breaks down each element and delves into how to apply each to SBMHQGP goals.

1. Specific: Goals should be clear and unambiguous. Avoid vague language and define exactly what you want to achieve.

- **How to apply to SBMHGP goals:**
 - Clearly identify the target population (e.g., "students in grades nine through twelve"; "students identified with higher needs for behavior support").
 - Specify the action or change you want to see (e.g., "increase the number of individual students by 60% percent (120 total students) who feel a sense of belonging"; "decrease the number of office referrals by 5% each year"; "increase student participation in the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program by 10%"; "increase end of year Acadience reading proficiency scores by 5%"; "increase attendance rates by 5%").
 - Define what "participation" and other key terms mean in the context of the LEA goals.

2. Measurable: Goals should be quantifiable to ensure trackable goal progress and measurable goal achievement.

- **How to apply to SBMHGP goals:**
 - Include numbers, percentages, or other metrics ("60% (120 total students)", "5% each year", "30% of students participating in SOS").
 - Specify how you will measure progress ("This will be measured by a climate survey tool"; "Baseline data (data collected prior year(s))").
 - Set baseline data and target data ("Baseline: 40% (80/200) of individual students report feeling a sense of belonging"; "Projected target data for the next school year is less than 174 or fewer office referrals").

3. **Attainable:** Goals should be realistic and achievable given the LEA's resources and constraints.
- **How to apply to SBMHGP goals:**
 - Consider the LEA's current capacity and resources (personnel, funding).
 - Set targets that are challenging but not impossible to reach.
 - Break down large goals into smaller, more manageable steps.
4. **Relevant:** Goals should align with the LEA's overall mission and priorities and address a specific need/problem.
- **How to apply to SBMHGP goals:**
 - Ensure the goal directly relates to improving student mental health, safety or well-being.
 - Connect the goal to broader school improvement efforts.
 - Justify why the goal is important and how it will benefit students.
5. **Time-bound:** Goals must have a three-year projected timeline and deadline for completion.
- **How to apply to SBMHGP goals:**
 - Specify when the goal should be achieved ("By the end of the 2026-2027 school year"; "By the close of the 2029 school year").
 - Milestones or interim targets must be set to track progress each year that the grant funding is given to the LEA ("End of year one target"; "End of year two target"; "End of year three target").

Example S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goal One: School Culture

By the end of the 2026-2027 school year, the onsite school social worker will increase the number of individual ninth through twelfth grade students at ABC Academy's sense of belonging by 6% as measured by a climate survey tool.

Baseline: 40% of individual students are knowledgeable.

Target for the end of year one: 42%

Target for the end of year two: 44%

Target for the end of year three: 46%

Services: Promote a positive and inclusive school environment that supports students' social-emotional well-being through monthly whole classroom instruction. Implement school-wide initiatives to foster a sense of belonging and connection. Hold community events at the school to create a sense of community and allow students to interact with each other in a fun and relaxed setting.

Goal Two: School Culture

By the end of the 2026 school year, students participating in Tier 2 social skills with the school social worker will increase their skills knowledge and increase in using coping strategies by 15% as measured by a pre and posttest

Baseline data: 50%

Target for the end of year one: 55%

Target for the end of year two: 60%

Target for the end of year three: 65%

Services: Design mentoring programs in which students are paired with older students or adults in the community. Implement school-wide recognition systems that reward students for their positive behavior. Implement restorative practices to build relationships and community within the school, allowing students to feel heard and respected. Provide social skills training for students who need help interacting with others.

Goal Three: Student Safety

Decrease the number of office referrals for students identified and referred with higher need of behavior/social skill support by 5% each year.

Baseline data: 174 office referrals

Target for the end of year one: 171

Target for the end of year two: 168

Target for the end of year three: 165.

Services: Regularly meet with teachers to discuss student progress and identify those who need additional support. Conduct small group sessions to provide targeted supports and skill-building assistance regarding emotional regulation, stress management and executive functioning. Provide individual counseling to students experiencing significant challenges that impact their interpersonal relationships, self-esteem and/or possible family difficulties. Track and monitor student progress and participation in social skill lessons, small groups and individual counseling. Use data to adjust and refine interventions as needed.

Goal Four: Student Safety

By the close of the 2026 school year, all school staff will complete a mental health first aid training and referral pathway training by the school nurse. We will see a 10% decrease in suspensions for all students, as measured by our student information system (SIS).

Baseline data: 200 suspensions

Target for the end of year one: 3% decrease

Target for the end of year two: 6% decrease

Target for the end of year three: 10% decrease

Services: Provide comprehensive training to all school staff on recognizing signs and symptoms of mental health issues in students. Educate staff on the appropriate referral pathways for students needing mental health support, ensuring timely and effective intervention. Offer ongoing consultation to staff on how to support students with mental health needs and de-escalate crisis situations. Develop crisis intervention plans and train staff on how to respond effectively to crises.

Goal Five: Academic Achievement

By the end of the 2026-2027 school year, increase end of year Acadience reading proficiency scores by 7% for third through sixth grade students receiving regular social and emotional learning (SEL) lessons from the school counselor as measured by the Acadience reading assessment.

Baseline: 60% of third grade students are proficient.

Target for the end of year one: 63%.

Target for the end of year two: 67%.

Target for the end of year three: 70%.

Services: Design age-appropriate lessons focused on skills that support academic success (self-regulation, focus, organization, resilience, growth mindset). Deliver these lessons regularly to third through sixth grade students. Adapt lessons to meet the specific needs of the students. Share SEL strategies that teachers can integrate into their classroom instruction. Provide teachers with resources and materials to support students' social-emotional development.

Goal Six: Academic Achievement

By the close of the 2027 school year, increase math proficiency for seventh grade students with low attendance who have been referred to the academic counselor for support by 10%. This will be measured by the LEA's math assessment.

Baseline data: 50% of referred seventh grade students are proficient.

Target for the end of the next school year: 55%.

Services: Identify and address barriers to attendance and learning for students with low attendance. Develop personalized attendance plans with improvement strategies and accountability measures. Provide academic support through tutoring, study skills and organizational skills development. Collaborate with parents and guardians through regular communication and resource provision. Work with teachers and staff to identify struggling students, develop interventions and monitor progress. Connect families with community resources that can address barriers to attendance. Develop and implement attendance incentive

programs. Track and analyze attendance data to identify trends, evaluate interventions and adjust.

Goal Seven: Student Engagement

Increase attendance rates by 3% each year for students that have been referred to the school counselor for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) when identified with chronic absenteeism (missing 10% or more school days) by the end of the 2026-2027 school year. Data will be measured by daily attendance records.

Baseline data: 20% of students are chronically absent.

Target for the end of year one: 19.4% chronically absent.

Target for the end of year two: 18.8% chronically absent.

Target for the end of year three: 18.2% chronically absent.

Services: Provide Tier 2 PBIS with targeted skill building. Communicate with parents/guardians about student progress. Provide resources and strategies to parents/guardians to support their child's social-emotional and academic development at home. Identify students who need additional support beyond the scope of the school counselor's services and make referrals to external mental health providers or other community resources; coordinate with external providers to ensure comprehensive support for students.

Goal Eight: Student Engagement

By the end of the 2026-2027 school year, seventh through ninth grade students who receive targeted lessons on mental health resources and suicide prevention by the school social worker will report a 10% improvement in attendance as measured by attendance rates from the beginning to end of the year.

Baseline: 50%.

Target for the end of year one: 3%.

Target for the end of year two: 3%.

Target for the end of year three: 4%.

Services: Conduct age-appropriate suicide awareness and prevention lessons. Teach students how to recognize warning signs of suicide in themselves and others. Provide students with information about available mental health resources within the school and community. Train school staff in suicide prevention and how to identify and support at-risk students. Organize school-wide events or campaigns to raise mental health awareness and reduce stigma. Establish a safe and confidential space where students can discuss their mental health concerns. Collaborate with families to provide support and resources for students struggling with mental health issues.

By following these guidelines, LEAs can create effective and measurable SBMHQGP goals that contribute to positive student outcomes.